

THE USE OF MIND MAP TECHNIQUE IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH WRITING

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to know how mind map technique helps students in writing descriptive paragraph through teaching learning process to eighth grade students of SMP Koperasi Pontianak in academic year 2013/2014. The research form is classroom action research that conducted in two cycles consist of two meetings and one meeting. The subject of the research is eighth grade students numbering 36 students. The finding of the research shows there is increase in students' writing using mind map techniques. The increase was encouraged by teacher's effort in identifying the main problem in students' writing and then finding the solution. The process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting helps the teacher to evaluate the activities and plan the next action for a better result. The teacher found that it was better to use topic that is familiar to students and to model the process before encouraging them to start to use the technique for themselves.

Key words: Mind Map Technique, Descriptive Paragraph

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana teknik peta pikiran dapat membantu siswa dalam menulis paragraph deskriptif pada proses belajar mengajar di kelas delapan SMP Koperasi Pontianak tahun ajaran 2013/2014. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus yang terdiri dari dua pertemuan dan satu pertemuan. Objek penelitian adalah siswa-siswa kelas delapan yang berjumlah 36 siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan dalam kemampuan siswa menulis paragraph deskripsi dengan menggunakan teknik peta pikiran. Peningkatan tersebut didorong oleh usaha guru dalam mengidentifikasi masalah utama yang dihadapi siswa dalam menulis dan kemudian mencari solusi dari masalah tersebut. Proses perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pengamatan, dan refleksi membantu guru mengevaluasi aktivitas belajar dan merencanakan tindakan selanjutnya agar tercapai hasil yang lebih baik. Guru menemukan bahwa lebih baik menggunakan topik yang sudah dikenal siswa dan kemudian member contoh proses penulisan menggunakan teknik peta pikiran sebelum meminta siswa untuk menggunakan teknik tersebut untuk dirinya sendiri.

Kata Kunci: Teknik Peta Pikiran, Paragraf Deskriptif.

The students need to be able to express ideas through a functional written text in order to communicate effectively in society. However, writing is considered as a difficult skill as it requires active thinking throughout a continuous process in which thoughts and ideas are transferred into written text. As it is stated by Byrne (1993) that the production of graphic symbols have to be arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways to form a coherent whole. Therefore, it is by the organization of the sentences which is explicit and complete that the writers are able to communicate successfully with the readers.

Based on the observation, the students of Class VIII of SMP Koperasi Pontianak faced difficulties to write descriptive paragraph. The lack of ability to construct subordinate ideas to support paragraph topic and to make sentences that support the ideas in the paragraph were the students' problems in writing descriptive paragraph. In addition, the students also could not make the text coherent, so that the readers can follow the development of the ideas. Those problems made the score of students' writing in descriptive text was lower from standard minimum score in the school, that is 70. The problem above was overcome by using mind map technique. The action hypothesis is the use of mind map can improve students' descriptive paragraph writing at eighth grade students of SMP Swasta Koperasi Pontianak in academic year 2013/2014.

The researcher conducted a classroom action research to the eighth grade students of SMP Koperasi Pontianak in the academic year 2013/2014. It was conducted to know how mind map technique helps the eighth grade students of SMP Swasta Koperasi Pontianak in academic year 2013/2014 in writing descriptive paragraph. The data of the research were collected by using observation technique (checklist and field note) and analyzed by the description from the observation.

Mind map technique is considered suitable for teaching writing descriptive paragraph because it can help students to see relationship between ideas through visual design, and encourage students to group certain ideas together (Alamsyah in Riswanto and Putra, 2012: 62). The relationship between ideas should be clear in order to give vivid detail to the readers when reading a descriptive paragraph. Henry (2011: 43) states that descriptive paragraph helps readers create vivid mental images by using sensory details, such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, and/or textures. Thus, paragraph descriptive is made up of a number of descriptive sentences which convey a main idea and supporting details regarding objects and events. In detail, a well-written paragraph has following structure (Hogan, 2013): (1) Topic sentence, This sentence outlines the main idea that will be presented in the paragraph. (2) The supporting details, This is the part of the paragraph that presents details, facts, examples, quotes and arguments that support the main idea. (3) The conclusion sentence, This sentence summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. It may also lead the reader to the topic of the next paragraph.

In most writing classes, there are some stages applied in the classroom: (1) Basic writing stages: planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing. (2) External stages: responding (sharing), evaluating, and post-writing.

Meanwhile, according to White and Arndt (Harmer, 2001: 258) the process of writing should be seen as a set of recursive stage which include: drafting, structuring, reviewing, focusing, and generating ideas and evaluation. The model can be presented in figure below:

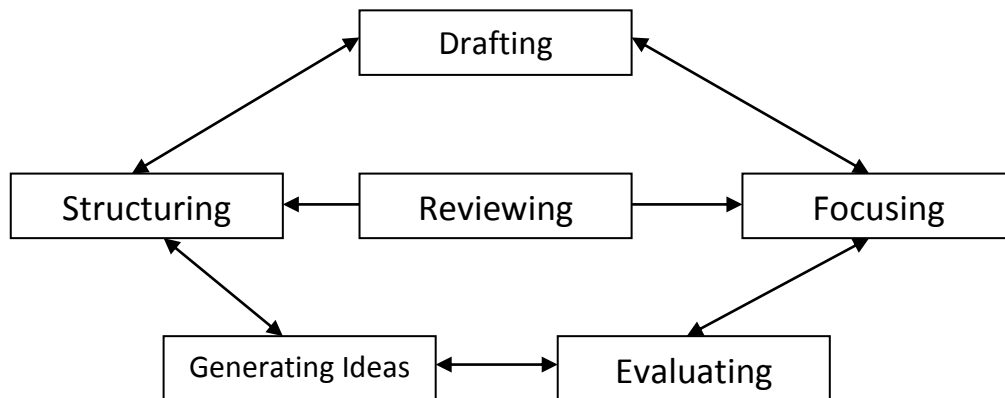


Figure 1. White and Arndt's process writing model (Harmer: 2001: 258)

Commonly, when the students are asked to compose idea or topic into form of writing, they usually invent ideas during their progress, and submit what they have written as a complete text. But however, during the process of writing, it is not sufficient to construct sentences just in one time. To have a satisfying writing, the students should have a preparation before writing. The preparation includes planning (pre-writing), drafting, revising, and editing. Therefore, good writers should do activities below (Brown, 2001: 346): (1) Focus on a goal or main idea, (2) Aware on who will seem to be the readers, (3) Spend some time on planning to write, (4) Let the idea flow, (5) Follow a general organizational plan, (6) Request for feedback on the writing, (7) Revise the work, (8) Make revisions as needed.

In the preparation stage as mentioned above, students are encouraged to do some activities in each stages that help them to improve their writing skill. Richard and Renandya (2002: 316) say that in pre-writing activity, students are encourage to write. They generate the ideas and gather information for writing. There are some ways that can be done in pre-writing stage: reading a passage, skimming and/or scanning a passage, conducting outside research, brainstorming, listing, clustering, discussing a topic or question, instructor-initiated questions, and freewriting (Brown, 2001: 348). Through prewriting activity, the students are helped to think more clearly, explore ideas, and then practice expressing the ideas before writing.

The second stage in the process is drafting. In this stage, students focus on the fluency of writing. Basically, students have to get something down on paper.

After making a draft, students can revise their writing. Revise is done on the basis of the feedback from the teacher. Revising should not only check for language errors (Richard and Renandya, 2002: 317). Revising also identifies whether or not the text makes sense, needs further detail to description or provide more information, needs to omit certain words because irrelevant or repetitive (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010: 23).

The last step of the process is editing. In this stage, students edit their work for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure and supporting details.

Descriptive paragraph as a material is suitable to be combined with mind map technique because it encourages the students to write as they can draw the ideas and the connection using many interesting visual design they create. Buzan (1994: 220) proposed several advantages of this technique: (a) Eliminate stress and unhappiness; (b) Enhancing creativity and originality; (c) Reduce the time for preparation, structuring, and completion; (d) Control the analytical and creative process continuously; (e) Give a more focused, organized and integrated result.

However, mind map technique also has disadvantages. It can be quite time-consuming in the beginning and may be difficult for other students to understand since it can be personal. In order to minimize the disadvantages of using mind map, teacher should ask students to use mind map more often so they can get used to this technique. Teacher also has to model the mind map to give example for students how to apply the mind map. Show the students step by step of mind map technique and paragraph constructed from the mind map. Therefore, students can understand more on how to apply mind map in their writing process.

However, the more the students use mind map, the easier it becomes. Students can gather as many as ideas into drawing and color and then write the ideas into paragraph so other students can understand their writing.

In conclusion, mind map is a technique which can be used to improve students' writing skill in writing descriptive paragraph as it helps students to be more focused and organize the paragraph structure well. Mind map also eliminate stress and enhance students' creativity.

The steps of mind map technique, as proposed by Buzan (194: 105), is as follow: (a) Take a piece of white paper and it is in a landscape position. (b) Start by drawing a coloured image in the centre of the paper and write the key word with capital letters. (c) Choose a color and draw the main themes of the mind mapping on the thick branches radiating out from the central image. (d) Add other main themes branches around the map. (e) Make thick and colorful branches spanning out from mind map. (f) Write basic ideas about the key word and still use the capital letters. (g) Add an image to all the main branches to represent each key theme and also use images to visualize every important key word on your map. (H) Let the mind map be as imaginative as possible.

After finishing the map, the students should begin to write their composition, working in pairs if it is necessary. Revising and editing can be done by teacher or their partner until they really sure about their writing. Once they have finished, they should exchange their texts.

In the case of applying mind map technique at eight grade students of SMP Koperasi Pontianak, the researcher followed stages below: (a) Pre-writing, In this stage, teacher present the goal and objectives of learning. After presenting the goal and objectives, teacher then gives brainstorming about specific topic they will dicuss by using questions or pictures. Teacher also shows the students mind map by giving example of how to make mind map by using colorful lines and icons then giving key words for each branches. (b) Drafting, In drafting, students write a paragraph based on the mind map they have made. (c) Revising, Teacher gives feedback on the students' writing and then they should revise their work individually. Students show their writing and if they make some mistakes in their writing, teacher then points out the mistakes and asks the students to correct them.(d) Editing, In editing stage, students tidy up their writing as they prepare final draft for evaluation by the teacher. After that, teacher gives feedback and follow up activities.

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METHOD

This research is intended to improve students' descriptive paragraph writing using mind map technique at eighth grade students of SMP Koperasi Pontianak in academic year 2013/2014.

The appropriate method that was used in this research was classroom action research. This method was applied when the teacher to find solution to real problem and improve instruction and increase students' achievement. As it is stated by Stringer, Christensen, and Baldwin (2010: 7) that action research is an integral part of classroom lessons, providing a framework on which to build creative and effective lessons to improve students' learning potential.

The improvements on action research are based on information that is gathered systematically. The first stage in CAR is planning. Planning involves identification and formulation of the problems. In this research, the researcher identifies low achievement in students' descriptive paragraph writing. After identifying and formulating the problem, the researcher then prepares a lesson plan which includes steps in implementing mind map technique in the classroom, observation sheet, and scoring rubric.

The second stage is action. The action stage in CAR is a combination of classroom activities and data collection. There are observation by colleague, field notes by the researcher while the class is in progress, and photographs in this stage.

Burns (2010: 103) defines the third stage as observing the result of the plan that includes analysing and synthesising the data collected. The data, which is students' score, is interpreted in tables and charts.

The final stage, reflection, is the stage where the researcher make interpretation from the data and then draw the conclusion.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that CAR is an effective way to improve the teaching and students' achievement in learning and provides

the chances for teachers to evaluate their own teaching activities and plan the improvement based on the result of the assessment.

Research subject are individuals whom the researcher obtains data through interaction and identify the information. The subject of this research was eighth grade students of SMP Koperasi Kota Pontianak in class F. This class consists of 38 students. They were chosen as the subject of this research because they encountered problems in writing descriptive text. They can not organize ideas in writing and find correct vocabularies.

In this research, the teacher used observation technique to observe the teaching-learning process. The writer carried out the observation during the process to collect data in the classroom. There were two observations, checklist and field note. Observation checklist structures researcher's observation or evaluation of teacher performance and students' activity. The checklist was a simple list of criteria that was marked as present or absent and provide space for observer comments.

Field note is a note written by the teacher throughout the data collection process. Anything occurred when the researcher applies the technique, including the obstacles that the teacher found in teaching-learning process, should be noted down.

To measure the students' achievement on writing, the writer prepared the writing test. the topics were describing people and animal. From the writing test, the students' achievement score were measured whether it is below or above 70. The data, here, was the students' writing which focuses on their content, coherence, and vocabulary scored by using scoring rubric of students' writing.

To collect data of the students' achievement, the writer completed it by using writing test. The measurement technique was employed to measure the students achievement and it was done through writing test. The researcher judged the students' writing by using scoring rubric to score the students' result in writing descriptive paragraph. The scoring rubric contains of content, coherence, and vocabulary.

The data were collected by using observations checklist and field note. Observation checklist structures researcher's observation or evaluation of teacher performance and students' activity. Meanwhile, field note was used to write down everything that occurred when the researcher applied the technique.

In order to answer the question, the researcher analyzed the data collected, that was students' result in writing test. To analyze the data, scoring rubric that consists of content, coherence, and vocabulary was used. Since this research concerns about the writing skills of the students, it was proved through writing test that was scored according to the scoring rubric.

Data that were collected in this CAR are not only quantitative data, but also qualitative data. It describes the activities of teacher and students in the classroom when the action happens. The data collected using field notes. From the field notes, the researcher then write all the details to find out what problems still exists and then determine the next step.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This research was conducted in SMP Koperasi Pontianak for the eighth grade students academic year 2013/2014. The students were identified to have problems in their writing skill. From the problem identification, the planning of CAR was constructed.

Based on the identification and formulation of the problem, the researcher designed the action alternatives that would be done. Procedures of this CAR was done through two cycles. Every cycle was conducted in line with the objectives of the research. The targets that were reached in the two cycles are as follows: (a) Cycle 1, the teaching of writing skill by using mind map technique. (b) Cycle 2, the teaching of writing skill by using mind map technique based on the outcome of cycle 1.

The procedures of the first cycle goes as follows: (1) Planning, Before doing the research, the teacher as the researcher made a planning to find out the problem solving. In this stage teacher prepared observation sheet and scoring rubric for individual evaluation. Teacher also made lesson plans to improve students' descriptive paragraph writing by using mind map. The lesson plan was also supported by the media that were used in teaching. (2) Acting, In this stage, teacher presented the goal and objectives in learning, and introduced the topic. After that, she explained mind map as the technique that would be used in the teaching-learning process. She also gave example on how to use mind map in writing a paragraph by giving questions or pictures first before writing down the main idea on the whiteboard. Then she drew numbers of colourful lines as the branches from idea as the sub ideas (supporting ideas). Students then were asked to say the keywords for each branches. When the mind map was ready, the teacher showed a paragraph that was constructed from the mind map and pointed the main idea and supporting ideas. The next step was giving pair work to students. They were showed a picture of an animal and made a mind map based on the pictures. Each pair discussed and made a mind map by sharing ideas and writing down the main idea and supporting ideas. After finishing their mind map, every student was asked to make a draft based on the mind map they created. The drafts were checked by the teacher to make revision needed. Based on the teacher's revision, students then edited their writing. While doing the action in accordance with the implementation of role play technique, the teacher needed to collect data on teaching-learning process and students' performance. The data was collected by observation. The teacher was helped by her collaborator in observing the activity of students in teaching and learning process. (3) Observing, In this phase, the researcher analyze the data collected in action phase. Teacher should observe teaching learning process and make some important notes written in the field notes. (4) Reflecting, The result of the observation was used to do the reflection to know whether the action of teaching can improve students' writing skill or the process should be repeated in next cycle. The researcher and collaborator discussed to find the strength and weakness of the action that has be done. Finding the weakness, in the cycle 2 was expected to get a better outcome in teaching.

This was shown by the improvement of students' score in their writing test in each cycle. Thus, it can be said that mind map was appropriate for the students to maximize their ability in exploring ideas and using their imagination while they are producing a descriptive paragraph.

Discussion

The term mind map was first used by Tony Buzan in 1993 who describes it as an instructional strategy where the learner places supra-ordinate concepts on paper and links the sub-ordinate concepts as appropriate (Buzan, 1994: 59). It is seen as a powerful tool to help students overcome problems with the organization of their ideas and thoughts (McGriff, 2000). According to McGriff, "mind maps are an excellent way to help learners to organize knowledge, to empower themselves to better comprehend the key concepts, and principles in lectures, readings, or other instructional materials" (2000: 9). Buzan (1994) describes mind maps as a representation of cognition and comprehension in the learner, and as an excellent way to help learners to express themselves both verbally and visually. Indeed, in their mind map, learners may use pictures and colours which may help in the process.

In teaching descriptive paragraph writing at eighth grade SMP Koperasi Pontianak, the researcher choosed mind map technique. There would be writing tests in each cycle. After all students were given topics related to descriptive text and taught how to use mind map technique, they would be asked to produce descriptive text using mind map in groups. They worked in groups so that they can discuss one another related to descriptive text. If they still found some difficulties in this writing activity, the students could ask the teacher before they were given test in the end of the study.

1. Cycle 1

The steps in using mind map for teaching descriptive at SMP Koperasi Pontianak in cycle 1 : the teacher explained the topic that would be presented in teaching-learning process. The teacher explained the mind map and gave the students handout and explained some vocabularies in descriptive paragraph. After that, the teacher used pictures to interest students and help them to build mental image. The students then were asked to mention some words or phrases related to the topic. The teacher explained once again about the procedure in writing. The students were asked to produce descriptive paragraph in groups. The teacher and students reviewed the lesson.

2. Cycle 2

The steps in using mind map for teaching descriptive paragraph at SMP Koperasi Pontianak in cycle 2 : the teacher explained topic that would be presented in teaching-learning process. Then the teacher showed a picture related to the topic asked the students to mention words or phrases and tenses used in descriptive paragraph. After doing this action, the teacher and students discussed the words or phrases and tenses used in descriptive paragraph. The next step the teacher gave the students work sheet. The

students wrote descriptive paragraph individually. The teacher and students reviewed the lesson.

The students' score was based on their individual writing. They practiced how to use mind map before they produced the writing individually.

Throughout observations, it was noticed that the students did not have problems with brainstorming ideas using the mind map technique for their topic. For example, the researcher gave a task to write about the description of a cat and the students came up with lot of interesting ideas to write about. This was supported by the mind map the students created. What was seen as an obstacle at this stage, however, was that the students could not narrow-down their ideas and be specific in their selections of what they were going to write about.

The problem was noticed also during the second writing task that was given to the students while implementing the teaching technique. From analyzing the students' writing, it was noticed that the students focused on listing down their ideas from their maps rather than focusing on the structure of their writing. It seemed that they all had the same misguided idea, which was the more ideas they added, the better their writing would be. Therefore, the researcher's task was to help students understand that they could produce a good piece of description paragraph using two or three ideas but needed to support them with lots of relevant examples to make the description clear.

To achieve this aim, the researcher implemented different strategies to help the students overcome this problem. There was a noticeable transformation where students learnt after brainstorming ideas how to be specific in choosing the best ideas to write about. In the last writing test, it was noticed that some students produced a second draft of their original maps where they selected only three ideas to write about from her other ideas. This showed that the students understood the importance of being specific in choosing ideas to write about.

During the implementation of the mind map technique students took a long time to design their maps. For example, on the first task students were given forty minutes. From researcher's observation the students spent too much time on designing their maps rather than focusing on writing the descriptive paragraph. As a result, they handed unfinished pieces of writing at the end of the class. From analyzing the students' writing, the researcher found out that that focused on writing as many ideas as they could and how their mind maps will look after they finish.

At this stage, unless the researcher did something to help them with time issue the mind mapping could actually create a real problem. As mentioned previously, the researcher gave the students different tasks which focused on the time issue to train them how to use their time wisely to design their maps. At the beginning, there was no improvement noticed. However, in the third test it was noticed that the students improved their time management and their skills in using the mind map technique. This could be related to an improvement in the speed of their thinking abilities and their abilities to evaluate the information before start writing. For the researcher's observation and notes which were recorded during writing test, it can be seen that there was change in the amount of time that students took to finish their mind maps and start writing. This gave the students

enough time at the end to proofread their writing. Also it was noticed that some students went back after finishing their writing to make sure that they had included all their ideas from their maps in their writing.

From analyzing the data collected from the research, it was noticed that there was development in students' thinking skills, where they became better in generating ideas and evaluating them quickly. Moreover, the students were able to retrieve their prior knowledge about different topics and design mind maps using this knowledge. Therefore, it could be said that mind map can impact students' thinking and aid in retrieving information in an assessment situation. The evidence suggests that mind map may impact on students' abilities to plan and organize their ideas for writing tasks. Mind map is a form of a graphic organizer which has been recommended as a way to scaffold meaningful learning for students (Buzan, 1993). As a result, the mind map technique would seem to be particularly suited to help students in planning their writing as the approach encourages students to reach for and adapt a deeper level of understanding of the writing topics.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Mind map technique was something new for that class, so they were motivated to use this method and they were encouraged to learn more about descriptive paragraph. It was also helpful for the students to find related ideas and develop the chosen topic sentence from the main topic to be a real descriptive paragraph. This was shown by the improvement of students' score in their writing test in each cycle. The percentage individual was improved. Thus, it can be said that mind map was appropriate for the students to maximize their ability in exploring ideas and using their imagination while they are producing a descriptive paragraph. Besides, their mastery in choosing appropriate words was better than before. They always used dictionary when they tried to find appropriate words while creating mind map before they wrote a descriptive paragraph.

Suggestion

After concluding the research finding, the researcher wishes to give some suggestions for the teacher as follow: (1) Mind map technique can be used in teaching learning process since this technique is very useful to improve students' writing. (2) Preparation needs to be done before doing teaching because the preparation will influence the output of teaching learning process. The preparation includes lesson plan, materials, media of teaching learning and assessment to measure the students' achievement. (3) Mind map technique might be useful to ask students to brainstorm ideas for topics of their choice. (4) Mind map technique can be used to help students in planning their writing as the technique encourages students to reach for and adapt a deeper level of understanding of the writing topics. (5) Mind map technique can be used not only in teaching learning descriptive paragraph, but also other kind of texts which are taught both in junior and senior high school.

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